

**THE DISTRIBUTION AND OCCURRENCE OF *ACANTHOCINUS*
DEJ. AND *AGAPANTHIA* SERV. (COL.: LAMIIDAE) IN THE
BRITISH ISLES**

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ALPHABETICAL symbols used are explained in Kaufmann (1989). Italicised letters signify species which are widespread throughout the county/vice-county; bracketed ones require modern confirmatory evidence; a dagger (†) indicates introduced or fortuitous specimens.

Acanthocinus aedilis L.

If one ignores its subfusc, admirable protective coloration, *Acanthocinus*, the Timberman Beetle, is without doubt the most spectacular Longhorn of our indigenous fauna, because the antennae in the male are some five times, that is, up to 10cm long, the length of its body, if rather shorter but still extraordinarily long in the female. At rest the antennae are usually held at right angles to the body, trailing behind it when the beetle flies.

The species is one of the three exclusively Scottish longicorn Coleoptera; it turns up, however, and continues to do so with great regularity in many counties elsewhere in Great Britain and Ireland, being exported southwards principally in pit props and logs.

Distribution is centred mainly in the older forests of the Scottish Highlands, but the beetle is also established in some Lowland counties. As is the case with a number of our other Cerambycids and Lamiids, *A. aedilis* is now in danger of being over-collected and has become scarce.

SCOTLAND: AS AY† BF BW† ED† EI EL KF KI LA† LL OI† PE PM PNR FRX.

Many adventitious specimens have been found in mines, sawmills and wood merchants' yards in

ENGLAND: BK CH CU *DM* DT DY EN (ES) EX GE HF L LN LR MM MY *ND* (in softwood timber cargoes washed ashore from wrecked ships) *NM* *NN* NO NS OX SE SH *SL* *SN* SR *ST* SY WC WN (WS) WY

WALES: CM GM

IRELAND: AN DU.

A 1989 television programme on the flora/fauna of the ancient Caledonian Forest showed momentarily *A. aedilis* successfully thwarting an attack by foraging black ants: to see a live British beetle at all on the "box" is an event in itself!

The larva is found principally under the bark of trunks, branches, roots and stumps of dead or dying trees such as larch, Scots pine, silver fir and spruce, but there is an unusual record from alder logs; and abroad, it has been reported as a pest infesting stricken *Panolis flammea* (Klausnitzer & Sander, 1981).

The many Hymenopterous parasites to which the larva is host include *Bracon praecisus* Ratz., *Coelobracon initiator* Nees, *C. neesi* Marsh, *Coeloides abdominalis* Zett., *C. initiator* F., *Doryctes imperator* Hal., *D. pomarius* Rein., *Ephialtes mesocentrus* Grav., *E. tuberculatus* Fourcr., *Iphiaulax impostor* Scop., *Neoxorides collaris* Grav., *Poemia notata* Holmgr., *Sichelia filiformis* Grav. and *Xorides irrigator* F.

Larvae and pupae are capable of resisting long periods of immersion in sea water (Bartlett, 1918; Duffy, 1953).

It seems that pupation happens twice annually: once, in summer, eclosion taking place in August and September, when the adults emerge into the open to dry off — their antennae take several days to harden; and again, later in October, in which event the pupa, or if metamorphosis is completed the perfect insect, will over-winter. Adults and lately eclosed beetles thereafter appear as early as March in the following year. It is possible, therefore, to find newly formed pupae and imagines under the bark of the same parent tree well into the autumn and winter. The life cycle in consequence may extend from one to two years.

The cutting down of large tracts of forest has undoubtedly led to the dispersal of the beetles from the neighbourhood; this is encouraging, for they are not regarded as particularly injurious insects, nor do they attack healthy conifers. Provided that so beautiful a species is not too zealously pursued and captured its future in Britain seems secure.

Acanthocinus enjoys basking in the sun and will settle on stumps and piled logs. It was known to all our early entomologists and was first depicted here two centuries ago (Martyn, 1792).

Agapanthia villosoviridescens Deg.

The range of this very attractive non-lignicolous Longhorn is principally easterly, but distribution does extend centrally through the Midlands to include a few Home and more westerly counties. There are no records from elsewhere in the British Isles.

ENGLAND: BD BX CB ES EN (GW) HT HU LN LR NM NO OX SH (ST) WK WN WS WW WY

This beetle is one of our only two Lamiids which are herbicoles, its larva developing in these herbaceous plant stems:— Blessed Thistle, *Carduus* sp., *Chrysanthemum*, Hellebore, Hemp Agrimony, Hogweed, Marsh Ragwort, Marsh Thistle, Monk's Hood (also *Aconitum anthora*), Mugwort, Nodding Thistle, Rough Chervil, Stinging Nettle, Wild Angelica, Wild Parsley, Wild Parsnip and Yellow Loosestrife.

The larvae eat their way downwards from the top of the plants, hollowing the stem as they go, sometimes as far as the roots, where they pupate.

Metamorphosis lasts from one to two years. After eclosion the adults crawl up the host plant to browse in the flowerheads; they rarely leave the

former to fly to other blossoms, although they have been beaten off willows and sallows.

The beetle is very wary and on approaching danger drops instantly into the usually dense herbage below where it is difficult to find. When captured it stridulates and also emits a smell which has been likened to that of a snuffed out candle.

Agapanthia is found from April onwards until October. Formerly regarded as rare, although Fowler (1890) recorded taking it in very large quantities, there is modern evidence indicating that it is slowly spreading and quite common in certain localities. Adults are perhaps best found shortly after dawn when the flowers are still covered with dew.

Wider distribution of this distinctive beetle, with its heavily patterned yellowish body pubescence and villous limbs and antennae, is unlikely to be encouraged by the wholesale mowing of grass verges and meadows where thistles and *Heracleum* proliferate.

Known as *A. lineatocollis* (Donovan, 1797) in most of our earlier lists, *Agapanthia* eventually appeared under its present specific name of *villosoviridescens* in the Hudson Beare catalogue of 1930. Donisthorpe (Fowler & Donisthorpe, 1913) draws attention to a melanic form of the beetle which occurred at Wicken Fen, Cambs, in 1899, now in his cabinet at the Natural History Museum, Kensington. The National Collections also contain a similar black variety found by Revd C.E. Tottenham in 1929 in the same locality.

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The second generation of *Scopula imitaria* (Hübner) (Lep.: Geometridae)

Further to B.K. West's note (*Ent. Rec.* 102: 109) on occasional bivoltinism in this species, it may be of interest to note the occurrence of a single example in my garden m.v. trap on 7th September 1989. The specimen is markedly smaller and darker than the normal form.— I.V. BEAVIS, 104 St James' Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 2HH.